
ECONOMIC PRODUCTION IN POSTCOLONIAL TIVLAND, 1960-2000

Terhemba Wuam

ABSTRACT

This paper is an appraisal of the nature of economic changes that have taken place in Tivland since 1960. It considers the foundations for the economy laid by export agriculture and its subsequent decline, together with the role that the discovery of oil came to play and occupy significantly in the Tiv and Nigerian national economy. The paper discovers that, while export agriculture declined, local and national markets emerged to meet the expanding Tiv production in the agricultural sector. Equally, from the 1970s, the seeds of industrialisation were laid by the Benue State and Nigerian federal governments in establishing factories such as the mega Benue Cement Company, which all expanded the modern economy in Tivland in Benue State of Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Activities in the wider society in which the Tiv live in Nigeria and the global economic world have all contributed one way or the other in influencing and shaping the nature and character of the Tiv economy from 1960. This is because the Tiv and Benue state after the colonial era were firmly integrated into the Nigerian nation-state and economic policies and activities at the national level or other parts of the Nigerian federation came to have significant impact on how the Tiv operated their own economy. This paper is a study of how the Tiv, building on the traditional economic foundations of the pre-colonial era and the capitalist forms introduced during colonialism expanded the scope of the internal and external dynamics of their economy from 1960-2000.

THE AGRICULTURAL FOUNDATION AND ITS DECLINE

At the time of independence in 1960, the Nigerian economy was dominated by agriculture which provided for over 70-80 per cent employment across the country, but more than 90 per cent employment in Tivland. Agricultural practice well into the post-colonial period in Tivland continued to be organized along household and small-holding lines with production based on traditional tools and farming methods. With the Benue area enjoying intermediate climatic conditions it was suitable for the production of both food and cash crops of wide varieties. Tivland produced both grains and root crops such as guinea corn, maize, millet, yams, cassava and sweet potatoes for consumption within the area and beyond to other parts of Nigeria. For the export trade, the Benue specialty was in the production of oil seeds such as beniseed, groundnuts, soya beans and shea-butter (Olalokun et al, 1979: 3-4).

The export trend for crops such as beniseed, groundnuts, soya beans and shea-butter however did not continue for long after 1960. This was because with the discovery of oil and its becoming the main foreign exchange earner for the federal, regional and state governments; governments' attention was diverted from finding ways to sustain and maintain the export potentials of the agricultural sector. Additionally, though it is a less mentioned point, there did not exist intellectual support to uphold the export potentials of the agricultural sector. The hangover from colonialism and the intellectual input that fuelled nationalism and led to the collapse of the colonial enterprise was organized along the lines that colonialism was inherently exploitative and that policies as they existed, both economically and infrastructurally, were geared towards the exploitation of the colonies. Much was made of the way the railways were organized and the emphasis on the development of the ports by the British with the sole purpose of exploitation by taking out the countries resources, and by having an export-led economy for Nigeria. Mbanefoh accentuates such thinking thus:

The inherited colonial transport and communications systems in Nigeria were built and maintained for the primary purposes of exporting cash crops and other raw materials produced in Nigeria to Europe, and importing manufactured goods from there. It was also for the deployment of the police and military forces of the British, to ensure effective control of the population, resources and territory of Nigeria to attain the

above purpose in particular, and to serve the global strategic interests of British imperialism in general (Mbanefoh, 1995: 40).

Thus, while it is probable that balance of trade and payment needs would have influenced the government to maintain and sustain an agro-led export industry as was the case with Ivory Coast, the discovery of oil, meant that at the intellectual and academic level, no strong case was made for continuing with an agro-export tradition. Discussions and comments regarding agriculture have always been concerned with making the country self-sufficient and not necessarily to return the country to being a major exporter of agricultural products. A condition that was considered by many as inherently exploitative for Nigerians and the farming communities. The following is illustrative:

...the system of produce-buying throughout the colonial period was characterized by a virtual monopoly of the business by the big foreign capitalist concerns, assisted by the pyramidal network of exploiting produce buyers and their myriads of agents, serving as go-betweens for the primary producers and the giant foreign monopolies and drastically reducing the earnings of the primary producers by the ruthless manipulations to their own advantage of the prices paid (Osoba, 1969: 528).

This intellectual bent, failed to comprehend two factors, that first Nigeria was now an independent country and could utilize the colonial structure for its own developments, and that export of agricultural products could now be made more productive for Nigerians and be a major driver of the Nigerian economy as much as it had benefitted the British. And that as such, export of agricultural products needed to be intensified and the rail lines as they were constructed needed to be considered as the economic artery of the country, to be much prized as the path for economic growth and development. Unfortunately, this case was not strongly made and colonialism and its economics continued to be vilified long after the era was passed. Invariably, what it meant was that Nigerian intellectuals and economic historians were fighting a battle that was already won, failing therefore to concentrate on the new one at hand, which was the economic development of the now independent country of Nigeria. Thus, while colonialism itself was no longer relevant, its economics still had much to offer in terms of lessons and policy options.

AGRICULTURE AND OIL IN THE POST-COLONIAL TIV EXPORT ECONOMY

As the country moved from an agriculturally-dependent nation to an oil-dependent one, a particularly interesting factor to call to mind was increased fiscal allocations to the agricultural sector as a result of the oil boom, which dismally failed to achieve the desired output and objective of increased crop production in the country. For within the period that agricultural contribution to the GDP was falling from 23.96 per cent in 1976 to 18.0 per cent in 1980 with a corresponding fall in the export value of agricultural commodities from 5.21 per cent in 1975 to 2.4 per cent in 1980; public expenditure for agriculture on the other hand, was on the rise. While budgetary contribution to agriculture was N2,310,180 between 1975-1980, it rose to over 383 per cent to N8,827,531 from 1981-1985 (Gokum, 2004; and Mbanefoh, 1995: 33). The irony is that given the high level of government investment in the sector, it may be that though government had not abandoned agriculture policy wise, its heart was no longer with the sector.

The British approach of working with individual farmers on smallholdings and agglomerating their produce which led to the formation of the groundnut pyramids and the high volume of the other commodities was now turned over to impersonal organizations such as the Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) and the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) whose managers diverted large sums of money meant for agricultural projects for their own corrupt enrichment (Mbanefoh, 1995: 33). Furthermore, while tractors and other inputs that the ADPs and the RBDAs were to provide were good in themselves, the planners failed to take cognizance of the utility value of the new technology vis-à-vis the traditional production methods that farmers were used to and whether the Nigerian farming population was ready for a leap forward from the utility of a hoe to that of a tractor.

Another factor that also meant that the export trade which was a cash crop trade did not receive much intellectual input to see how it could be sustained was the contention by scholars that the production and trade in cash crops was inherently exploitative as well as fundamentally having negative consequences for food production in the country. The arguments were couched as if it was either cash crops or food crops and that the production of one invariably led to a precipitate decline in the other. And in this case, enforced cash crop production meant that the food crop production was de-emphasised with dire implication for the material existence of the people. The following illustrates the point:

Prior to the coming of the Europeans, agriculture was the bedrock of the Nigerian society. However, with the conquest of the area, food production was relegated to the background, and this has contributed to the food crises being experienced today... in the agricultural sector, the coercion exerted on the peasant to cultivate export crops, together with colonial land and taxation policies led to the neglect of the production of food crops. Also the building of infrastructure like roads which led to the influx of European trading companies into the area further intensified the demand for labour to be diverted from food production to the production of export crops, thereby worsening the food crises in the area (Akubor, 2009: 146).

Although studies may find it expedient to criticize the emphasis on cash crops, the impact of investments in cash crops or export agriculture when critically considered has its merits and demerits. The introduction of new crops for export and local consumption such as soyabeans, beniseed and cotton did have beneficial effects. Production and trade in cash crops contributed to the expansion of the economy thereby enhancing growth and development. It also led to the development of a new consumer society based on the foundation of agricultural production and a capitalist economy in Tivland and Nigeria. Igirgi, therefore, summarises the marriage of the Tiv economy with capitalism as follows:

The linkage of Tiv economy to the world capitalist system caused more money to be let into flow. It also led to the introduction of foreign goods and services which invariably influenced taste and consumption patterns among the people. The gross effect was the emergence of a new elite whose economic successes was measured along previously non-existent parameters such as ability to build Western-style house structures and the acquisition of other conveniences such as motorcycles, bicycles, iron beds etc. (Igirgi, 1993: 118).

Thus the rationale for viewing cash crops as being a negative factor to economic growth in the colonial territories is a bit flat and does not comprehend the positive role they played in the local economy, though, without doubt, the colonizers reaped the fuller benefits. In several instances in history such as in the American plantations and in Asia; cash crops have often proved beneficial as they did in the Yoruba cocoa plantations and the oil plantations of the Niger Delta. Often these cash crop centres proved to be sources of wealth and capital accumulation for those who were engaged in them. The role of cash crops as drivers of the economy and engines of growth should therefore not be underestimated. It is this taken together with food crop production that can lead to wholesome development. Depending on peculiar situations, one aspect of agricultural production can become the dominant economic activity. In Tivland, the case is that during the pre-colonial era, food crops were the leading Tiv exports to the other groups within the Benue valley. With the coming of colonialism, the major shift was towards the production of export crops otherwise known as cash crops such as cotton, beniseed, groundnuts and soya beans. A true reading of the agricultural situation is provided by Varvar's analysis that:

It is interesting, however, to note that the increasing production of beniseed by the Tiv people during the colonial period hardly affected the position of the yam crop in the Tiv economy. If anything, beniseed came to share with yam the position of leading crop in the Tiv economy (Varvar, 2008: 145).

TIV ECONOMIC PRODUCTION FOR THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL MARKETS

The international export or cash crops trade did not represent the sum total of Tiv agricultural production, the area was equally a vibrant centre that exported food crops outside the Tiv area to widely dispersed centres across Nigeria. Much of the expanded demand for food crops produced within the area came about as a result of the greater security afforded traders from far places and also the provision of infrastructures such as railways and roads aided by vehicular transportation such as lorries. Improved transportation as a result gave credence to Adam Smith's comments that:

Good roads, canals, and navigable rivers, by diminishing the expense of carriage, put the remote parts of the country more nearly upon a level with those in the neighbourhood of the town. They are upon that account the greatest of all improvements. They encourage the cultivation of the remote, which must always be the most expensive circle of the country. They are advantageous to the town, by breaking down the monopoly of the country in its neighbourhood. They are advantageous even to that of the country. Though they introduce rival commodities into the old market, they open many new markets to its produce (Smith, 1973: 147).

Immediately after independence, the country's need for foreign exchange gave it no creditable alternative than to continue to rely on export agriculture to generate revenue for the state's treasury and for development efforts. Policy towards agriculture therefore followed the colonial format initiated since 1946 with its dominant feature of marketing boards and emphasis on export production. This trend continued till about 1970 when oil gained the upper hand as a major foreign exchange earner for the Nigerian state (Varvar, 2008: 156, 161). Consequently, the federal and states governments' failure to continue to promote the export trade in agricultural commodities meant that Tiv farmers were largely now focused on providing the burgeoning and easily accessible national market with food crops.

The question, however, is to what extent the cessation of the foreign market affected the Tiv farmer. Although it is clear that production shifted from cash crop to food crop, the loss of the foreign markets has over the years meant that the Benue economy lost a potentially substantial and rich foreign market that it would have continued to service, largely on her policy terms with the coming of independence. The Tiv and Benue state lost the opportunity to train her own people in the export trade and develop an indigenous crop of entrepreneurs working as produce buyers and exporters. Given the usually high returns from the foreign trade, it also meant the loss of potential profits from it. Basically, the failure to continue to service a foreign market meant that farmers and allied traders and merchants could not continue to develop skills or expertise in the production and marketing of these crops that would have continued to occur with the retained interest of the Western consumers to guarantee that crops produced were of high standards. With their vested interest, Tiv farmers would have continued to benefit from cutting edge research in the production of the export crops both within and outside Nigeria. Unfortunately, development along these lines was stalled with the discovery of oil, which threw Nigerian economic planners and policy makers off the agriculture track. Table 1 presents the bleak nature of the post-colonial export trade from the Benue area, which was the dominant producer of beniseed in Nigeria.

Table 1: Commodity Board's Purchase of Beniseed, 1968-1979

Year	Quantity (tones)
1968-69	13,101
1969-70	17,796
1970-71	5,806
1971-72	3,227
1972-73	3,648
1973-74	3,131
1974-75	3,919
1975-76	5,000
1976-77	1,802
1977-78	2,000
1978-79	1,445

Source: T.A. Varvar, "A History of Tiv Rural Migrant Communities in Tivland and Neighbouring Area, 1900-2000", PhD Thesis, Department of History, Benue State University, Makurdi, 2008, 163.

For the Tiv area, after 1960, trade in food crops continued and expanded to encompass the entire economic zones of Nigeria as the export trade continued to decline in value and volume in the post-colonial period. Gbor is explicit when he stated that "food production by Tiv farmers increased rather than decrease in response to the market created by oil wealth" (Gbor, 1993: 65). Indeed, the growth in the Tiv and Benue's share of the agricultural market for yams nationwide for the 1977/78 season was 23.5%. For that season, out of 5309 metric tons, 1378 were produced in Benue. The state was also the fifth largest producer of cassava and the fourth largest producer of rice in the country for the 1977/78 farming season (Awojobi, 1980: 64). Table 2 shows what came to constitute the major exchange crops of the area that were distributed to other parts of the country.

Table 2: Food Crops Produced from Tivland

S/No.	Crop	Area of Production
1.	Yam	All over Tivland with higher concentration in Ukum, Katsina-Ala, Gboko, Buruku, Vandeikya, Gwer and Guma
2.	Cassava	All over Tivland with higher concentration in Katsina-Ala, Gboko, Gwer and Buruku
3.	Cereals (mainly rice, maize, sorghum and millet)	All over Tivland with concentration in Vandeikya, Gboko, Buruku, Katsina-Ala, Makurdi, Gwer and Kwande
4.	Soya beans	All over Tivland with concentration in Gboko, Buruku, Vandeikya, Katsina-Ala, Makurdi, Gwer, Kwande
5.	Groundnut	All over Tivland
6.	Citrus	All over Tivland with concentration in Gboko, Vandeikya, Konshisha
7.	Beniseed	All over Tivland with concentration in Gboko, Buruku, Katsina-Ala, Vandeikya, Makurdi
8.	Mango	All over Tivland
9.	Sugar Cane	Katsina-Ala and Buruku
10.	Melon	All over Tivland
11.	Vegetables (mainly pepper, tomatoes and okro)	All over Tivland with concentration in Gboko, Buruku, Makurdi, Tarka

Source: Adapted from D.A. Surma, "Agriculture in Benue State", in D.I. Denga, ed., *Benue State: The Land of Great Potentials*, Rapid Educational Publishers Limited, Calabar, 1995, 140-141.

Apart from agriculture, mining was another component of the economic activity emanating from the Tiv area. And though, in the immediate post-colonial period, mining was not a major component of the economy of the area, Tivland had a history of silver and galena mining along the River Katsina-Ala in the late nineteenth century. By the twentieth century, the deposits were not in economic quantities to sustain further exploration and operations. While coal deposits in the Idoma area were economically feasible, the Tiv area had no comparable mining activity to recommend till the discovery of limestone deposits in Yandev in commercial quantity and their development in the 1970s, leading to the establishment of the Benue Cement Company in 1980. A development that changed the whole complexion of the Tiv economic landscape. The cement company transformed the nature of the Tiv and Benue economy and introduced a new dimension to the economic activities of the people. The company represented a significant outside investment in the area to develop local resources, which in turn had positive implications on exchange relations within Benue state after 1980 (Ayatse, 1995: 171).

While of course, from the 1850s and onward to 2000 the Tiv operated and maintained manufacturing capacity that enabled them to meet the needs of their society and for export to the neighbouring groups, from the period of British colonialism, the society began to either through choice or pragmatic necessity

to adopt and adapt aspects of Western technology and science, and manufacturing know-how to expand their productive capacity. The continual dual nature of the Tiv economy was, however, much reflected in the traditional manufacturing sector and the modern manufacturing sector. Though both traditional and modern manufacturing produced goods for consumption and exchange, the manner in which they did differed, and the process by which, these goods found their way into the market also followed dissimilar lines.

In traditional manufacturing, using the case of the textile industry as provided by Igirgi, the period after 1960 was one of increasing output by a factor of over one hundred per cent. However, the production pattern followed that of traditional agriculture, which meant that production was still based on households or organized as cottage industries with little connection to the formal economy. Igirgi, provides that in the last twenty years, the textile industry moved from its traditional origins as the production base expanded, especially in urban centres, where production became modernized and was organized not necessarily along family lines, but operated as business ventures (Igirgi, 2007: 222-233). Other aspects of manufacturing and distribution were in the first twenty-five years after independence still largely dominated by the traditional sector and these included pottery, smithing, weaving, carpentry, dyeing and leatherworks as well as beer brewing (Makar, 1994: 16-17).

Modern manufacturing as the state evolved was also gradually introduced into the Tiv area. The period after Benue state was created in 1976 witnessed the greatest fervor of industrial activities. Investments were made in finance, agriculture, mining, tourism, publishing and consumer goods. The Benue state government owned wholly or in partnership with others substantial shares, in the companies that were established. The dominant company, of the period, the Benue Cement Company located at Tse-Kucha was controlled by the federal government with the state government retaining substantial shares. A list of major companies established after independence is provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Industries in Tivland/Benue State

S/N	Industries	Year of Incorporation/ Production Commencement	Location	Nature of Business
1.	Benue Investment Co. Ltd.	1979/1979	Makurdi	Financial and Management Consultancy Services
2.	Benue Cement Company PLC	1975/1980	Tse-Kucha, Gboko	Cement Manufacturing
3.	Lobi Bank (Nig.) Ltd.	1983/1983	Makurdi	Banking/Finance
4.	Benue Brewery Ltd.	1980/1985	Makurdi	Beer Production
5.	Taraku Mills Ltd.	1986/1988	Taraku	Refined edible vegetable oil, flour, livestock feeds processing

6.	Benro Packaging Co. Ltd.	1978/1988	Mbayion-Gboko	Paper bag manufacturing
7.	Benue Hotels Ltd.	1988/1989	Makurdi	Catering and hotel services
8.	Benue Links Ltd.	1988/1989	Makurdi	Mass transportation
9.	Hawaian Agronomics (Nig.) Ltd.	1981	Makurdi	Agricultural development and consultancy
10.	Benue Educational Supply Co. Ltd.	1980	Makurdi	Educational books proprietors, publishing and supply
11.	Benue Cattle Ranch Ltd.	1981	Ikyogen	Ranching
12.	Benco Roof Tiles	1981	Abinsi	Roof tiles production

Source: J.O.I. Ayatse, “The State of Industrial Development in Benue State” in D.I. Denga, ed., *Benue State: The Land of Great Potentials*, Rapid Educational Publishers Limited, Calabar, 1995, 181.

Apart from these companies controlled largely by the government, the private sector was also very much involved in economic activities in the area. The major Tiv entrepreneurs of the colonial era continued to expand their businesses and were continually joined by a crop of new entrants to trade and business. The area also continued to be an attractive point of call for traders and business men from outside Benue, especially Ibos from eastern Nigeria who over time came to dominate the retail aspects of basic consumer goods (Makar, 1994: 202). Tiv entrepreneurs such as Chief Jerome Tilley-Gyado, Joseph Gberikon Ahenji, Gideon Ierkwagh Kajo, Benjamin Ako Dzungwe Shande, Akaazua Muemue, Chief Denen Tofi and Chief Victoria Mbakaan Tsendzuul among others, all established or started trading and economic enterprises that became important in the economy of the area. These companies operated in agriculture, retail, construction, finance, education, health, services and the hospitality industry (Mbapuun, 2009).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the structure of the Tiv economy after the colonial era was one still dominated by the agricultural and extractive sectors, with manufacturing and industries gradually being introduced. Though it was an open economy with capitalism adopted as the basic economic philosophy, the state was in the forefront of sponsoring the major economic initiatives given the capital requirements involved and which many of the indigenous Tiv entrepreneurs were yet to acquire; this was in addition to the limited economic scope in the conception of their business operations. Overall, we observed that, the agricultural sector, though not in decline, saw other sectors emerge to compete with it for dominance in the Tiv economy. These were sectors such as distribution, manufacturing, mining, services and the government/public sector.

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Terhemba Wuam holds a Ph.D. and is a Senior Lecturer and the Head of Department of History and International Studies, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, Niger State, Nigeria. He is also the co-editor of *China and Africa: The Threats and the Opportunities and Colonialism and the Transition to Modernity in Africa*.